BOOKS and AUTHORS ❀ REVIEWS and COMMENT

LITERARY CRITICISM AND BOOK NEWS

Mr. Krehbiel's Study of the American Negro's Music and Song—The Mechanics of the Short Story—Other Book Reviews.

NATIONAL MUSIC.

AFRO-AMERICAN FOLKSONGS. A Study in Racial and National Music. By H. E. Krehbiel. Including Many Examples of Folksongs, with Pianoforte Accompaniments Arranged by the Author and by M. T. Burleigh, Arthur Mees, Henry Holden Huss and John Van Broekhoven. Octavo, pp. xii, 176. G. Schirmer.

Besides blowing into vigorous flame the embers of a controversy now twenty years old, this book of Mr. Krehbiel's opens new paths through the mazes of a delightful subject, that of folksong in general and of the music created and evolved by the Southern negroes in particular. And it contains a collection of folksongs, arranged for piano and voice, that should prove uncommonly attractive to musical readers.

The embers of the musical conflict that followed the first public hearing of Antonin Dvorak's symphony "From the New World" have been kept reasonably warm ever since that important event of December, 1893; in fact, whenever the symphony is played there is apt to be a turning over of hot ashes and a scattering of sparks of argument or scorn. From now forward they should blaze merrily for some time to come. But before taking up this considerable subject, which is, after all, not the theme of the book, but only one of its episodes, it must be stated at once that "Afro-American Folksongs" sets a new standard of study and investigation in its field.

Mr. Krehbiel modestly explains in his preface that he has had to be a pioneer in the scientific study of the curiously alluring music of the plantations and camp meetings. So he has, although for the actual examples of music to be studied he has had to rely in large part upon specimens that had already been published, or that were collected by others and given to him for first presentation in this book. But in his method of comparing and grouping the material and of using it to reach conclusions based upon firm musical foundations Mr. Krehbiel has had no predecessors. Serious as has been his treatment of the subject, and authoritatively as he has weighed every factor, carefully avoiding positive statements when the evidence was deemed inconclusive, Mr. Krehbiel has succeeded in making his book popular as well. It is not for nothing that he has studied through many years the general field of folklore; he has the true folklorist's regard for the nature of his subject as something living and breathing and very human, rather than the attitude of one dissecting a nameless body or fitting together dry bones. Whatever heights of scientific attainment he has gained, it is not at the expense of being a mere dry-as-dust codifier.

Considering the vast popularity of negro slave songs and their recent and "debased offspring," the music known the world over as "ragtime," it is somewhat surprising that the task set himself by Mr. Krehbiel should not have been essayed before this. Above all, it is a pity, as he forcibly remarks, that the musical harvest that lay ready for the reapers in the Southern states before and just after the Civil War was not more fully gathered. For the making of folksongs, which had been in more or less steady progress among the plantation negroes ever since their slavery in America began, ceased automatically when the conditions of their lives changed after their liberation. Here was a people still primitive enough to achieve natural expression in music of song and of the dance; every influence of their lives tended to make this the inevitable form of their spontaneous emotional utterance—the inheritance of African rhythmic and melodic impulses, their lack of education, their acute sorrows and their childlike joys, their religious fervor, their natural sweetness of voice. No better object of research and exploration by trained musicians—literary men or sociologists would not have filled the bill—could have been asked a generation or two ago than just this body of folksong. While expeditions were organized to visit remote fastnesses and barbarous regions of the earth, this precious and now perishing possession of the American negroes was allowed to flourish and to pass with scarcely more than a superficial regard. True, the words of these quaint or joyful or lugubrious ditties were carefully and appreciatively gathered. Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, George W. Cable and others well qualified to do so performed well this part of the task. But of a scientific and methodical recording of the music of negro folksongs there was comparatively little. And now it is too late; the Old South is fast passing, and with it the integrity and the unspoiled quality of this primitive expression. Sophistication has set in. One wishes that there had been, at the appropriate time, an American Museum of Natural History or a government institution alive to the chances of doing both folklore and music a real service.

In this new book, which summarizes the author's frequent newspaper and magazine essays upon the subject and welds them into an organic whole, Mr. Krehbiel has followed a logical programme. He begins by establishing what folksongs are. Next he seeks to show that the songs of the American slaves conformed to the definition, and as such were born, not made; that they were "spontaneous utterances of the people who originally sang them"; that they were also "the fruit of the creative capacity of a whole and ingenuous people, not of individual artists," and that they "give voice to the joys, sorrows and aspirations of that people." Mr. Krehbiel finds that, except for Indian music, these utterances of the negro form the only considerable body of song that has come into existence in America. He recognizes that "they contain idioms transplanted hither from Africa, but as songs they are the product of American institutions, of the social, political and geographical environment within which their creators were placed in America; of the influences to which they were subjected in America; of the joys, sorrows and experiences which fell to their lot in America."

And so, logically it will seem to most readers, Mr. Krehbiel declares them to be American folksongs. And here is where he takes issue with those who deny any but general or perhaps Czechish significance to the beautiful "New World" symphony which Dr. Dvorak wrote while in New York, and who scout the idea that the Bohemian composer was in any real degree influenced by the negro melodies that he had so earnestly and happily studied here. It is further contended by this group of commentators that Dvorak was both visionary and unscientific when he suggested, after his symphony had stirred the world of music, that in the treasures of negro folksong there might be found "inspiration for truly national music." The battle raged hotly over these questions when Dvorak was still alive, and shots have been fired in Boston and in Bohemia for and against the originality and the Americanism of what the American negroes sang in Southern slave days, and of its availability as material for an American school of music. Mr. Krehbiel's contributions to this controversy in The Tribune and elsewhere have been numerous, and in this book the cumulative argument in favor of this music as authentic folksong and as a proper field of study and inspiration for American composers is strongly convincing.

In writing this book Mr. Krehbiel had before him for exact study and comparison no fewer than five hundred songs. He has examined their intervallic peculiarities, their rhythmical and structural makeup, and he concludes that, while their combination into songs took place in this country, the essential elements came from Africa; "in other words, that, while some of the material is foreign, the product is native; and, if native, then American." He cites the occurrence of repeated words and refrains, probably corruptions of African originals, that meant nothing even to the American negro singers themselves, since they had lost all recollections of the African dialects; he also brings out the likelihood that musical memory would persist much longer than word memory. This, by the way, is an uncommonly interesting psychological point. Further, the author takes up the theory, held by some, that the negro has merely remembered and distorted music he had heard sung or played by white persons, the evidence which he brings out here making it seem highly improbable that this origin can be ascribed to more than a certain proportion of the songs of plantation days.

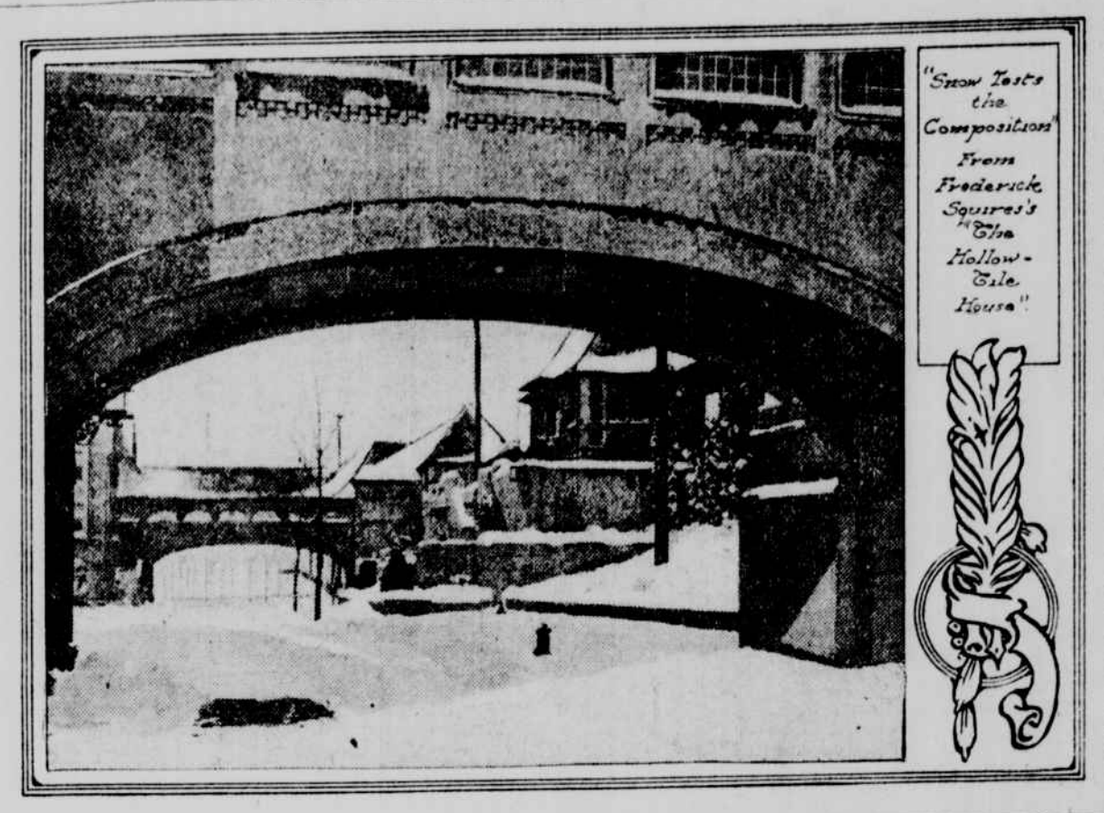
Besides the Southern negro songs, Mr. Krehbiel has written with appropriate gayety and lightness of touch about the hybrid songs of Creole origin in Louisiana and in the French West Indies. Here he draws freely from his correspondence with Lafcadio Hearn, both published and unpublished. Hearn was not musical, but was keenly interested in anything having to do with folklore, and his feeling for words, their meaning and color, was sensitive in rare degree. Moreover, Hearn had an adorable sense of humor, and his descriptions of West Indian rites, with dances or songs, and of the satirical songs, the "pillards," directed against some object of popular scorn or ridicule, will not readily be forgotten.

As already indicated, Mr. Krehbiel has enriched this book with a large collection of folksongs, text and music, with accompaniments for pianoforte made by H. T. Burleigh, Henry Holden Huss, Arthur Mees and John Van Broekhoven. He points out that in some cases it might have conduced to a more exact rendering to have given only the melodies of these songs, since harmony was not always implied. But practical considerations ruled, and the reader will find himself duly grateful, even though certain of the harmonizations leave something to be desired in point of distinction.

Notwithstanding the fact that monotony is an inherent characteristic of some folksongs, harmonizations, when they are made, should have regard for the ears of musically conventional white persons. That is to say, chords in the accompaniment should avoid repetitions of certain notes or effects unless such are obviously of the essence of the music, as implied by the melody itself. To emphasize this point, let the reader try over some of the rather commonplace harmonizations made by Mr. Burleigh and compare them with the simple yet curiously eloquent arrangements made by Mr. Krehbiel himself of songs collected for him by Southern women, or with such an admirable bit of work as the accompaniment to "Weeping Mary," arranged by Mr. Huss. Mr. Mees, as director of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, arranged some of the best of these old folksongs for four-part male chorus, and thus they appear here, though also having piano accompaniment.

To say that these songs brought together by Mr. Krehbiel, some of them not before published, will prove a source of much pleasure to the amateur and to the general musical reader is to speak with moderation. Any of them can be played by persons of the most ordinary musical skill; their simplicity is a part of their charm. They range from grave to the gayest of the gay, and they are so placed in the pages of the book as to illustrate most aptly and clearly the comments the author makes as to interval, rhythm, flatted sevenths or other distinctive elements. On the whole, then, this book is one of real musical and scientific importance, yet it need not frighten the veriest amateur in music or in folklore. It is a welcome addition to the literature of its subject.

SAMUEL SWIFT.



"Snow Tests the Composition" From Frederick Squires's "The Hollow-Tile House".

BEAUTIFUL HOUSES

A Book for Those About to Build.

THE HOLLOW-TILE HOUSE. By Frederick Squires, A. B., B. S. With 215 illustrations. Large square 8vo., pp. 208. New York: William T. Comstock Company.

As a popularizer of the art of the architect, Mr. Squires's book is very welcome. He tells the layman frankly about the "tricks" of the profession, as he calls them, meaning thereby, however, the why and how of effects obtained. He discusses the manufacture and use of tile, the decorative possibilities of stucco, the development of units in brick work, and finally the texture-tile as an exterior finish in itself. He ardently advocates flat roofs, and, to make his book thoroughly practical, goes at length into methods of construction. A companionable volume for those "about to build"—for themselves, of course, for that has become the primary meaning of the verb with us. It is, however, the illustrations that make the widest appeal. They are well reproduced from photographs taken by the author himself with a professional eye and purpose, that of showing these houses at their best. There are pictures here ranging all the way from the Villa Borghese and the Villa Medici, from picturesque old houses in Strassburg and Amiens, from the lowly loveliness of English village streets, to modern American country dwellings, these again ranging from palaces in all but name to the simple dwellings within the reach of the majority of us who contemplate "building."

THE OTHER SIDE

Japanese Immigration and Japan at Home.

ASIA AT THE DOOR. A study of the Japanese Question in Continental United States, Hawaii and Canada. By Kyoshi K. Kawakami. With a prologue by Doremus Scudder and an epilogue by Hamilton W. Mable. 8vo, pp. 269. The Fleming H. Revell Company.

THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF JAPAN. By Okamura-Yoshisaburo. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. viii, 150. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Mr. Kawakami's defence of his countrymen as desirable and assimilable immigrants is packed with information. Apart from its direct purpose, this is, indeed, a book that no student of the vexed larger problem of the future of immigration in this country can afford to leave unread. If the author indulges for a moment in the "tu quoque" argument when it comes to a comparison of commercial, financial and social morality, he is, on the whole, moderate in his statements, while his comparisons with other elements of the present-day immigration are often suggestive. Occasionally he talks straight to the point, as when he bids us observe that the Japanese have neither Highbinders nor Black Handers. Toward the Chinaman he is, however, to put it mildly, not partial. To him the difference between Orientals, by which he means Japanese alone, and Occidentals is only superficial; *ergo*, the Japanese can be as readily turned into good citizens as were the immigrants of an earlier period.

His review of what the Japanese have achieved in this country is interesting. Most of them are agriculturists, as we know, and this is in part the root of the trouble in California. But he reminds us of Dr. Jokichi Takamine, the discoverer of adrenalin and taka-diastase; of Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, of the Rockefeller Institute, and of Dr. Asakawa. An able book that bears the stamp of thorough investigation.

Professor Okamura's volume is made up of the lectures delivered by him some time ago in Boston. He presents a poetic view of his nation and its civilization, proving, incidentally, that the westernization of Japan is superficial only, and intended to remain only that by the country's rulers. There is great charm in his chapters on Japanese home life.

AGAIN THE SHORT-STORY

Two New Introductions to the Literary Profession.

THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY. By Carl H. Grabo, Instructor in English, the University of Chicago. 12mo, pp. xi, 321. Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE MODERN SHORT-STORY. A Study of the Form: Its Plot, Structure, Development and Other Requirements. By Lucy Lilian Notestein, in collaboration with Waldo Hilary Dunn, Professor of Rhetoric and English Composition in the University of Wooster. 12mo, pp. xii, 211. The A. S. Barnes Company.

Nobody seems to have thought of it before; it is not given, so far as we have discovered, in any of the lists of "seed-corn for stories"; so we throw out the idea for what it may be worth to any eager student of the art. The plot is one which would serve equally well for a Short-st ry, or a short-story, or just a short story. An honest youth, employed as a bookkeeper, is reasonably happy. Out of the joy of his heart one day he up and writes a story, which isn't very long, about somethin, or other that happened to him. It is accepted by a magazine. Aha! A career is before him. Everybody says so. All he needs to succeed, he hears, is a little scientific knowledge of short stories. Somebody recommends a list of recent works on the subject. He buys a dozen or so of the latest. He neglects his stupid business. We forgot to say that in his flush of fame and success he married. He intends a little later to settle somewhere among the Harding-Davises, the Maxfield-Parrishes, and other interesting people who do things. But he becomes so wound up in the study of structure, characterization, atmosphere, style and denouement that any natural aptitude he may have had for self-expression is smothered in him, though he had only one story to tell, anyway. He loses his position, takes to drink, and finally commits suicide. Also, he had found it very difficult to discover, in the wealth of literature at hand, exactly what constituted a "short story."

This is not at all to suggest that manuals on the short story are not of considerable service to mankind. Countless persons have been known to earn from $5 to $500 a week at the literary profession after an attentive perusal of one of them. And regarded merely as aids to culture, it may be argued with great plausibility that an intelligent understanding of the ingredients and composition of a short story adds fifty per cent, or even more to one's pleasure in reading one, even a bad one. Two perfectly new studies of the art offered the student are of opposite types. Mr. Grabo's simply written little book has nothing about it of the correspondence school variety of instruction. It approximates, rather, an easy college course in the general principles of prose narrative. The author does not find it possible, indeed, to frame a definition of the "short story" as a distinct form of narrative. His book, in short, seeks to lead the amateur worker at story composition into an examination of literature. "The Modern Short-Story," on the other hand, sticks to Professor Brander Matthews's hyphen and capital S. It defines with a bang just what the Short-story, "in its strictly modern form," is, has nothing to do with the history of its evolution, and drives at practicality of treatment, while, at the same time, holding to a high ideal. Each volume is the outcome of experience in teaching college classes in short story writing, and, doubtless, each in its way responds to the requirements of many aspirants.

GOOD READING

New Volumes of the Home University Library.

The exceptionally high average of merit of the little volumes of the Home University Library, which now counts seventy-seven numbers, has already turned the inclusion of an author among its contributors into a certificate of his high standing as an authority on his special subject. This is true of all the departments of human knowledge to which the library is devoted—science, economics, history, art, literature. Of the five new volumes that form the latest addition to the series two are devoted to literature, and take their place at once with the best of their predecessors in this section. The "Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle" of H. N. Brailsford, M. A., is a model of ripe scholarship and of competent, progressive handling of its material. The book is, in substance, a history of the influences of the French Revolution in England from their beginnings in Dr. Richard Price's discourse on the love of country, preached in 1789, to the publication of Shelley's "Hellas." Within the limited space at his command Mr. Brailsford has managed to deal fully with the larger historical and philosophical aspects of the movement—with Burke and Paine as fully as with Price and Godwin, adequately with figures more afar, fully again with Shelley, and understandingly and sympathetically with Mary Wollstonecraft. The chapter devoted to her deserves, indeed, to be read by all modern women.

Professor Gilbert Murray's "Euripides," like Mr. Brailsford's volume, is distinguished by its readable quality as well as by scholarship. In this day of much invocation of the Greek dramatists this book should have many readers. It deserves them, and they will find their profit in it.

In the field of economics we have "Co-partnership and Profit Sharing," by Aneurin Williams, M. A., chairman of the International Co-operative Alliance. Mr. Williams deals with what has already been done in this field in England, France and this country, both by workingmen and by employers. Unfortunately, the profit sharing plan of Mr. Ford has come too late to be included in this survey. The author does not consider the two movements as panaceas, but as measures that may bring closer the solution of the greater problem. He believes, however, that the two, acting in accord with other great forces of reform, will do away with the old distinction between owners and workers, and change capitalism into a form of co-operation. Dr. David Fraser Harris writes of "Nerves," of which we talk so glibly and know so little, and Sir John Murray of oceanography, in "The Ocean" (Henry Holt & Co.).

CURRENT FICTION

Extravaganza, Humor and the Picaresque.

THE FLYING INN. By Gilbert K. Chesterton. 12mo, pp. 329. The John Lane Company.

"The Flying Inn" is a story about the introduction of total abstinence in England by act of Parliament—a tract, one supposes, against paternalism. This amazing proceeding, we are to understand, is but a symptom of the coming conquest of the West by the East, of the kingdom by its Indian empire, by the sobriety of its Mahometan subjects, the vegetarianism of its Hindus, not to forget its mysticism. In fact, the fakir Misysra Ammon maintains that British civilization was Mahometan before it became Christian. There are many crosses in London, he points out, of which Charing Cross is the best known, but there are even more crescents: St. Mark's Crescent, St. George's Crescent, Regent's Park Crescent, nay more, Royal Crescent! And the Arabic article "al" is constantly found in English speech—in alcohol, Alsop's ale, Ally Sloper, and the Albert Memorial, for instance.

To return to British total abstinence by act of Parliament, however. An equivocal clause in the act causes all the trouble by attaching to the sign of an inn the right to sell intoxicants wherever it shall be put up. And so a gigantic Irishman goes around the country with the sign of "The Old Ship," a barrel of rum and a cheese, opening pubs wherever his perverse fancy dictates, revelling in the Irishman's dearest occupation of being "agin' the government." He had been "agin'" all the great powers in the Near East, where, as King of Ithaca, he had fought Turkey and threatened to upset the peace of Europe. At home—if England can be called this Irishman's home—he outdoes the wildest of his earlier exploits.

Throughout Mr. Chesterton calls our attention in his usual way to things that are upside down in this world, and stands on his head before things that are sufficiently shipshape to serve. He directs his humor, his satire, his love of paradox against mysticism and politics, socialism, the House of Commons, the British aristocracy and the British common people—against everything that can be crowded into his pages. And, as we have referred above to the passages in his earlier extravaganzas that we like best, so we select from this new one Mr. Chesterton's savage satire on the immoral politics of the Great Powers in the Near East. It is a gem. The nonsense verse, originally published elsewhere and scattered through the narrative, is capital, and, before we finish, a word must be said in appreciation of Quoodle, as delightfully "doggy" a dog as we have found in many a day in an English book.

OUR "ISLANDS."

THE STREAK. By David Potter. With illustrations by Gayle Hoskins and M. J. Spero. 12mo, pp. 348. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

"The Streak" is a much better novel than one might suppose from its lurid title and ghastly cover. Among the numerous tales of the "Islands" since the American occupation of the Philippines it is an exceptionally interesting story. The background of social life in Manila is effectively presented; the motley throngs of Americans, Filipinos and Europeans which move across the scene are painted deftly, with much color; there is an undercurrent of deep politics and dark intrigue in the story that is well handled; and the group of characters which plays out the drama contains several very believable figures. Especially convincing is the fine Major Crittendon, constabulary officer, "a man of a sort often found in our government service; a sort whose existence is too little known to the average American." An admixture of Filipino blood with white in the person of the young university-bred business man, Dick Nelson, is "the streak" in question. His having hidden the fact of it from his South Carolina bride is one of the causes of the gradual estrangement of the pair. The story comes to a dramatic conclusion, in which Fate leads Anne Nelson out of deep waters.

IN THE DAYS OF ELIZABETH.

IDONIA. A Tale of Old London. By Arthur F. Wallis. Illustrated by Charles E. Brock. 12mo., pp. 319. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

The chief merit of this story of a young country gentleman who came to London in Elizabeth's day and found himself enmeshed in plots and counterplots too numerous and intricate to be detailed here is that it constantly grows in quality and interest. We are, for once, not at court; a servant of My Lord Pembroke is the nearest approach to the centre of things. Neither do we visit, in our hero's company, the haunts of the roistering immortals, or the playhouse. We are among the obscure multitude, in the corners where hide the hunted Popish plotters, in "Petty Wales," which was a refuge of thieves and cutthroats; in obscure taverns and on the river bank, for this is essentially a picaresque novel—a tale of roguery. There is a multitude of villains, and the arch-villains are two; there is also a maiden fair, who gives her name to the story. Of course, we go down to the sea in ships, but that is only an episode; the real interest centres in London town. A brave story, unflagging in the multiplicity of its incidents, and told, on the whole, successfully, in that adaptation of Elizabethan English with which historical novelists have made us familiar.

STRONG ARMS AND QUICK WITS.

THE RETURN OF THE NIGHTWING. A Sequel to "Alias the Nightwing." By Varick Vanardy. 12mo, pp. 336. The W. Dillingham Company.

Detective stories promise to take a prominent place among the novels of the reviving publishing season. They are begining to come in from all quarters. Mr. Vanardy's sequel to his story of Bingham Harvard, strong arm and quick of brain, of the theft that was "framed up" against him, of his desperate encounters with the police, and of his escape to Europe carries on the young man's adventures with undiminished zest. There is a list of desperate encounters here after his return to clear himself, for the police have learned to respect his brawn, and he himself, under the influence of his wife, Lady Kate, has grown less violent, but there is enough going on in these pages to satisfy the readers of the earlier book. Mr. Chester, the banker, is hard to be convinced, the corrupt police lieutenant, Rush, plays an impudent game, and the brawn and wits and conscious rectitude threaten to fail, kindly providence helps out. It is all very ingenious, with its constant reference to police conditions with which we are all familiar, and the end will satisfy all lovers of poetic justice. These stories are capital exciting light reading.